



Congressman Mike Simpson



Senior Newsletter

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Fall in Love with Social Security's Online Services

By Jeanne Tyler (SS Public Affairs Specialist in Boise)

Join the millions of users who have fallen in love with Social Security's online services. Here's a sampler of things you can do at www.socialsecurity.gov.

See if you qualify for Social Security benefits. You can use our online screening tool to see what benefits you might be eligible for from any of the programs Social Security administers. Then, you can use our benefit planners to calculate your benefit amounts, whether you're considering retirement or disability or the benefits available to your family if you die.

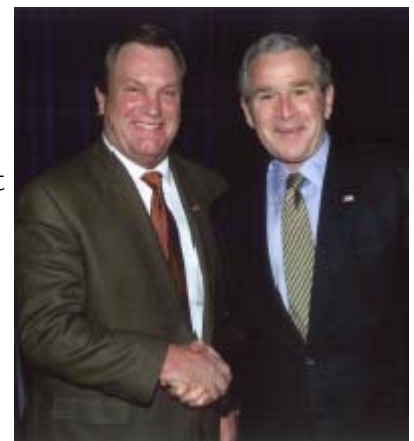
Apply for benefits. You can apply for Social Security retirement, spouse's or disability benefits right over the Internet. If you are applying for disability benefits you'll also need to complete the disability report, which is also available online. Need to take a break or look for some records to answer the questions? That's just fine with us: you can leave and then come back to complete it. After you have applied, you can return to the website later to check for status.

Find the office closest to you. There is much you can do online, but sometimes you

may want to visit a representative face-to-face. If that's the case, your first step is to visit our online field office locator. Just type in your ZIP code and find the Social Security office closest to you.

Get a Password. If you already get Social Security benefits, there's even more you can do online when you have a password. Anyone who gets benefits can get a password. With a password, you can check the information and benefit amounts in your Social Security records and change your address, telephone or direct deposit account information without leaving the comfort of your home.

Whether you're ready to apply for retirement benefits this month or you're just interested in getting an estimate for future benefits, check out our website at www.socialsecurity.gov and go to the "What you can do online" section.



Congressman Mike Simpson with President George W. Bush

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Washington, D.C. 20515
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Fax: 202-225-8216

Boise Office

802 West Bannock, 600
Boise, ID 83702
Phone: 208-334-1953
Fax: 208-334-9533

Idaho Falls Office

490 Memorial Drive, 103
Idaho Falls, ID 83402
Phone: 208-523-6701
Fax: 208-523-2384

Twin Falls Office

1341 Filmore, #202
Twin Falls, ID 83301
Phone: 208-734-7219
Fax: 208-734-7244

Pocatello Office

275 S. 5th Ave., #275
Pocatello, ID 83201
Phone: 208-233-2222
Fax: 208-233-2095

Don't Forget Your Taxes

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program

The VITA Program offers free tax help for low to moderate-income people who cannot prepare their own tax returns. Certified volunteers receive training to help prepare basic tax returns in communities across the country. To locate the nearest VITA site, call 1-800-829-1040.



Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) The Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) Program provides free tax help to people age 60 and older. Volunteers from non-profit organizations provide free tax counseling.

As part of the IRS-sponsored TCE Program, AARP offers the Tax-Aide counseling program at more than 7,400 sites nationwide during the filing season. For more information on TCE, call 1-800-829-1040. To locate the nearest AARP Tax-Aide site, call 1-888-227-7669, Idaho Commission on Aging

AARP Driver Safety Program

Established in 1979, the AARP Driver Safety Program is the nation's largest classroom driver refresher course designed especially for people age 50 and older. The course is typically taught in two four-hour sessions spanning two days and costs about \$10.

In addition to the traditional classroom modules, safe-driving classes are now available on the Internet through the AARP Driver Safety Online Course. The cost is \$15.95 for AARP members and \$19.95 for AARP nonmembers.



Graduates of the course, including the online version, may be eligible for automobile insurance discounts. Please check with your insurance agent prior to signing up for the course. For more information, visit www.aarp.org/drive or call Betty Chatburn in Boise at 208-375-7518.

IDAHO 511 TRAVEL INFORMATION SERVICE

The Idaho Department of Transportation launched its 511 travel information service that gives updates on winter road and weather conditions, emergency closures and access to tourist information, such as scenic byways and rest stops.

By dialing 511 or visiting: www.511.idaho.gov on the web, travelers will be updated as conditions change on Idaho's highways and provided more timely and accurate information.

The 511 phone system uses voice recognition technology, enabling callers to get information by speaking into the telephone and to make selections by using the phone keypad. The web site is designed for easy navigation and features clickable maps.

The 511 service is free and easy to use.



Fight Memory Decline with Lifestyle Changes

Roger Anunsen, the founder of MemAerobics, was the guest on the November Area V Agency on Aging television program, "ABC's of Aging". He discussed life long learning and how to re-ignite our cognitive abilities. During the program Roger encouraged the audience to fight memory decline with nine lifestyle changes.

1. **Exercise Your Mind:** Regular and adequate mental activity is necessary to healthy brain cells. Find a variety of challenges that you enjoy and regularly engage your brain.
2. **Get Regular Sleep.** Establish the right amount of sleep your brain (and body) needs and then do all you can to maintain your regular sleep pattern.
3. **Feed & Hydrate Your Brain:** A healthy brain **MUST** have regular and adequate supplies of food and water.
4. **Socialize with Others:** Tomorrow's prescription for cognitive improvement just might be: Enjoy one another's company.
5. **Take a Deep Breath.** A good supply of oxygen delivered to the brain is a necessary fuel for good health.
6. **Add More Physical Activity:** More blood flow generated from each extra physical movement will cause more blood flow into the brain, so . . . Just Move It.
7. **Lower Stress Every Day:** Try reducing stress for a few seconds at a time by learning how to take a "mindful" deep breath.
8. **Eat Omega 3 Fats:** Our brains are 60% fat, so eat good fats such as olive oil, walnuts, flax seed, and salmon.
9. **Eat Antioxidants:** Your mother was right: Eat your fruits & vegetables – especially the "bright ones" that are full of brain healthy antioxidants.

Source: Idaho Commission on Aging



MEDICARE: NO PENALTY FOR LATE ENROLLMENT

By Jeanne Tyler, SS Public Affairs Specialist

There will be no late enrollment penalties in 2007 for people who qualify for extra help and enroll in the Medicare prescription drug plan. This was announced by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), the agency that administers the Medicare prescription drug plan.

Initially, Medicare beneficiaries who qualified for the extra help had until December 31, 2006, to enroll in a prescription drug plan without having to pay a late enrollment penalty. But now, for all of 2007, the penalty will be waived. If you think you may be eligible for the extra help, you are encouraged to apply as soon as possible. The extra help could be worth an average of \$3,700 per year.

If your annual income is below \$15,315 for an individual (\$20,535 for a married couple living together), and your resources are limited to \$11,710 for an individual (\$23,410 for a married couple living together), you may qualify for extra help with your monthly premiums and deductibles.

If you plan to apply for the extra help, the easiest and most convenient way is to go online. Just visit www.socialsecurity.gov/prescriptionhelp/ and select the "Apply for help" link. You also can apply over the phone by calling us at 1-800-772-1213 (TTY 1-800-325-0778). If you prefer to complete the paper application, you can call the same number to request that we mail one to you, or stop by your local Social Security office to pick one up.

To learn more about the Medicare prescription drug plans and special enrollment periods, call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227; TTY 1-877-486-2048) or visit www.medicare.gov. Medicare also can tell you about agencies in your area to help you with Medicare prescription drug plans.

**Do you know someone who would like to
receive the Senior Newsletter?**

**E-mail Fran Symms at
fran.symms@mail.house.gov
or call 208-334-1953**
